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RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 3195
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RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 0666
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 1016
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UNCLAS TEL AVIV 002816

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

SIPDIS
E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

[1](#)1. Mideast

[1](#)2. Iraq

Key stories in the media:

Israel Radio quoted Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice as saying that important progress had been made in the talks between Israel and the Palestinians even though the goal of an agreement this year

had not been met. After a meeting of the Quartet at the UN, Rice said that Israel and the Palestinians had discussed, for the first time in a decade, the core issues. The radio reported that UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon praised, in his words of farewell for Secretary Rice, the efforts of the Bush administration to promote the negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians and called for them to continue. Ban was quoted as saying he expected president-elect Barack Obama to support the effort to reach an agreement that would lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel. Israel Radio reported that foreign ministers from members of the UN Security Council will meet this evening to approve the principles of the direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians based on the Annapolis process.

Israel Radio reported that representatives of the Quartet declared yesterday that there would be no retreat from the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. They praised the continuation of talks between Israel and the Palestinians in order to establish a Palestinian state alongside Israel in peace and security. The Quartet's representatives condemned the attacks on Israel and urged the Palestinians to dismantle the terror organizations. They also urged Israel to freeze the settlements and to restrain radical settlers. The Quartet's representatives expressed concern about the siege on the Gaza Strip and demanded that humanitarian aid to the residents not be affected.

Leading media reported that yesterday President Bush extended his warmest greetings to the Jewish people during a Chanukah candle-lighting ceremony.

The Jerusalem Post and Israel Radio reported that Richard Falk, the UNQs Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories, was barred from entering Israel on Sunday after the Foreign Ministry charged him with Qlegitimizing Hamas terrorismQ and Qdrawing shameful comparisons to the Holocaust.

The Jerusalem Post quoted former ambassador to the U.S. Danny Ayalon as saying yesterday that U.S. President-elect Barak Obama and his designated secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, could support an exchange of territories and populations in the West Bank as part of an agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. Ayalon is seeking a Knesset seat with Avigdor LiebermanQs Yisrael Beiteinu.

The Jerusalem Post reported that dozens of Bedouin citizens were made homeless after an unrecognized village was razed by the Israel Land Administration, days after a state-appointed commission recommended that many unrecognized villages be accepted as legal.

Maariv quoted a senior Israel Prisons Service officer as saying that unlike Gilad Shalit, Palestinians enjoy particularly favorable jail conditions. The media quoted PA President Mahmoud Abbas as saying that the Palestinians will not give up on the release of all prisoners and IsraelQs withdrawal.

Major media reported that Israeli stocks and NGOs are losing/might lose dozens of millions of dollars from Bernard MadoffQsQ fraud.

Leading media reported that yesterday Hizbullah Secretary General Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah called on his supporters to lift the siege on Gaza.

HaQaretz reported that Israel plans to send one of its most senior security officials -- the head of the Defense Ministry's Diplomatic-Security Bureau. Maj. Gen. (res) Amos Gilad --- to Moscow tomorrow to express concern over Russia's decision to renew contacts with Iran for the sale of advanced anti-aircraft missiles.

Electronic media reported that last night in Al-Yamun (West Bank), northeast of Jenin, IDF troops killed an Islamic Jihad militant.

The Jerusalem Post reported that in February the Israeli-made Heron Unmanned Aerial Vehicle will make its debut in Afghanistan as the main surveillance drone for the Canadian Armed Forces.

HaQaretz and Israel Radio reported that after expressing contradictory positions on Sunday, Hamas's leadership on Monday adopted a united stance: The cease-fire with Israel, which expires this Friday, will not be extended. Media reported that rockets have landed on the western Negev this morning. Major media cited a claim

by Israeli security officials that Iran has been applying heavy pressure on Hamas not to renew the truce agreement with Israel. The Jerusalem Post quoted Israeli defense officials as saying yesterday that Iran is replacing Egypt as the main influence on Hamas.

Yediot reported that around a month ago n New York President Shimon Peres and FM Tzipi Livni secretly met with Bahrain King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa.

HaQaretz reported that yesterday Supreme Court President Dorit Beinisch blasted the government for having failed to move a section of the separation fence as required by a court ruling issued 15 months ago, and ordered it to do so with no further delay.

Major media reported that the Jewish population of the West Bank has grown three times as fast as the general Israeli population over the last decade, according to a 2007 statistical yearbook published by the Ariel University Center of Samaria (northern West Bank]) in conjunction with the Samaria and Jordan Valley regional councils. The lion's share of the settlements' growth stems from a high birthrate: However, settlers still accounted for only 3.8% of the total Israeli population at the end of 2007, and 4.9% of the Jewish population.

Gen. William Fallon, who in March 2008 resigned as CENTCOM Commander was quoted as saying in an interview with Yediot that, like in Iraq, change will be effected in Gaza by a combination of military means and dialogue.

Yediot reported that the U.S. administration has conveyed to Israel a list of demands whose acceptance will allow Israel to joint the Visa Waiver Program. The newspaper quoted Interior Minister Meir Sheetrit as saying that most demands are just and to the point.

HaQaretz reported that yesterday the Jerusalem District Court indicted a West Bank settler --Q the son of the spokeswoman of the Jewish community of Hebron -- on charges of kidnapping and assaulting a Palestinian minor.

Leading media reported that veteran journalist Gideon Reicher is joining the PensionersQ Party as the second person on the Knesset E list.

Makor Rishon-Hatzofe reported that yesterday Chief Ashkenazi Rabbi Yona Metzger met with convicted spy Jonathan Pollard, who told him that he has great expectation from President Bush and that he hoped to be released soon.

HaQaretz reported that birthright israel, the popular initiative offering young Jews free trips to Israel, may be unable to pay for thousands of such trips in the summer of 2009, due to the financial meltdown of its largest donor. A \$20-million pledge to the group from casino mogul Sheldon Adelson is now in question.

All mainstream Hebrew-language newspapers led with investigations by the Health Ministry of the sudden deaths of four toddlers over the past month.

11. Mideast:

Summary:

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: QIt seems as though there is no alternative other than to continue the lull and to dig up from the rubble of history the series of understandings reached with Hamas in June via Egyptian mediation.

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in Ha'aretz: QNetanyahu will have only one problem: The international community will view him as responsible for the freeze, and will therefore try to pressure him.

The nationalist, Orthodox Makor Rishon-Hatzofe editorialized: QThe Hamas government must take care to return the abducted soldier to his family, with no connection to a cease-fire agreement.

Block Quotes:

II. "Extend the Truce"

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (12/16): QOn Friday, the Gaza cease-fire will officially expire. On the face of it, there should be no doubt about it -- the lull has in any case evaporated.... [However], at present, it seems as though there is no alternative other than to continue the lull and to dig up from the rubble of history the series of understandings reached with Hamas in June via Egyptian mediation. In another two months, a new government is expected to emerge in Israel, which will have to decide on a policy toward Hamas. In another month, when Mahmoud Abbas's term in office comes to an end, there is liable to be an upheaval in the Palestinian government. Under these circumstances, it would be better to refrain from causing unnecessary uproar in Gaza by embarking on operations that are liable to further complicate Israel's position, particularly among residents of the western Negev. Empty, threatening slogans certainly do not constitute an alternative to a carefully thought-out decision, which must be made as soon as possible.

II. "Now ItQs All or Nothing"

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in Ha'aretz (12/16): QThe stances taken by Netanyahu and Abbas pose a dilemma for the new administration in Washington. President-elect Barack Obama and Secretary of State-designate Hillary Clinton are committed to a two-state solution, but they will discover that any attempt to conclude a final-status agreement quickly is doomed to failure.... As far back as 1995, Yossi Beilin opined that the leftist government had to achieve Qmaximum peaceQ before the next election, lest Likud take power and halt the peace process. This is the third time since then that Likud has been poised to return to power. But just like the previous two times, this time, too, it will apparently enjoy freedom of action in managing the diplomatic process. Netanyahu will have only one problem: The international community will view him as responsible for the freeze, and will therefore try to pressure him.

III. "The Return of Shalit Even without a Resumption of Calm"

The nationalist, Orthodox Makor Rishon-Hatzofe editorialized (12/16): QIsrael ... is trying to apply pressure on Hamas to extend the [lull], but to no avail. According to the Defense Minister, Gilad Shalit is a reason to prefer calm over a wide-ranging operation. The Hamas government must take care to return the abducted soldier to his family, with no connection to a cease-fire agreement. If not, Israel will continue to abide by its commitments to the Palestinians, regardless of whether or not there is a cease-fire agreement.

I2. Iraq:

Summary:

Arab affairs correspondent Smadar Perry wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: QBush is hated in Iraq almost the way Saddam was. But it will be hard to uproot, even by force, democracy, which he established in Iraq and has perhaps been the occupationQs only achievement.

Block Quotes:

"Bush's Shoes"

Arab affairs correspondent Smadar Perry wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (12/16): "The hurling of the shoes tells the story of the new Iraq: When Saddam's statue broke into pieces, the masses took off their shoes to strike the hated dictator. A year later Bush's images were trampled upon and the Stars and Stripes was defiled with dirty shoes. Bush is hated in Iraq almost the way Saddam was. But it will be hard to uproot, even by force, democracy, which he established in Iraq and has perhaps been the occupation's only achievement."

CUNNINGHAM